GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:2194
ANSWERED ON:15.03.2017
Katchatheevu Island
K. Shri Parasuraman

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Indian fishermen were arrested in Katchatheevu Island recently particularly Tamil Nadu fishermen;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether the Government has taken up this issue with the concerned country for early release of these prisoners and if so, the details thereof; and

(d) the number of prisoners released as a result thereof during the last three years and the time by which rest of the prisoners are likely to be released?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
[GEN. (DR) V. K. SINGH (RETD)]

(a) & (b) While Tamilnadu fishermen have not been arrested in Katchtheevu itself, a number of them have been apprehended in waters between India and Sri Lanka.

(c) Government attaches the highest importance to the safety, security and welfare of Indian fishermen. As soon as reports of apprehension of Indian fishermen by Sri Lankan authorities are received, Government, through diplomatic channels, immediately takes up the matter with Government of Sri Lanka to secure their early release and repatriation along with their vessels. India has consistently maintained that the fishermen issues involve longstanding livelihood and socio-economic practices and humanitarian concerns on both sides. It has been conveyed to the Sri Lankan side at the highest levels that the issue needs to be handled with great care and sensitivity. A Joint Working Group (JWG) on Fisheries has been set up as a bilateral institutional mechanism to help find a permanent solution to all fishermen issues. It has also been agreed that Ministers for Fisheries of the two countries meet every six months to review the progress. The first meeting of the JWG on Fisheries was held in New Delhi on 31 December 2016 and the first ministerial meeting was held on 2 January 2017 in Colombo.

(d) The number of Indian fishermen released during the last three years is as under:

Year Number of fishermen arrested Number of fishermen released
2014 787 1045 (including 273 of 2013 & 772 of 2014)
2015 454 375 (including 15 of 2014 & 360 of 2015)
2016 290 333 (including 94 of 2015 & 239 of 2016)
2017 85 51 (51 fishermen of 2016 released on 06 Jan 2017)

Government has been pursuing with the Government of Sri Lanka the early release of the 85 Indian fishermen currently under their custody. As a result of our efforts, progress has been made in that direction which await the issuance of formal orders.

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